

Comment

The Canadian Champion

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Halton's sinking ship

We fear Education Director Wayne Joudrie may have bitten off more than he can chew when he accepted the most senior staff position at the Halton District School Board.

Two months ago, when Joudrie officially took over the board's top administrative role, he announced four goals — including a plan to bring unity back to a bitterly-divided board of trustees driven apart by unfounded accusations of assault, the overturning of the board's policy governance model and the shocking resignation of education director Dusty Papke.

We find the new education director's 'fresh start' approach extremely naive, given the fractions and volatile history of his board. While he may exude a 'play nice' attitude, some trustees appear to be dismissive of Joudrie's approach.

Responding to the director's remarks, board Chair Paul Tate said, "Unity, from my perspective, is a difficult concept. I think some dissension isn't bad."

Added former chair Mary Chapin, "I think (Joudrie) may find he might want to moderate his expectations in that regard ...

that there is no way this board can ever really work as a unit."

It seems Joudrie chose to ignore these ominous warnings from two of the trustees at the vortex of a growing political storm.

Now the education director faces the toughest challenge of his brief tenure — an internal leak of confidential information. The senior administrator's reaction to news of the leak suggests he lacks experience in dealing with such dysfunctional behaviour at the school board.

With his board appearing to exhibit signs of coming apart at the seams, Joudrie lashed out at The Champion's sister paper, the Burlington Post, questioning its journalistic ethics and accusing it of "hiding behind the public's right to know."

If Joudrie wants what's best for public education in Halton, he should be looking inward instead of blaming the local media for this board's failings. We respectfully submit a fifth wish for the education director's list — that Education Minister Gerard Kennedy finally put an end to this board's shenanigans by intervening in what is now a rapidly disintegrating situation.

Our Readers Write

Town and Region need to acknowledge changes in the way people do business

Dear Editor:

Two recent articles in The Champion discussed the expansion of Town Hall and the proposed Halton Regional Campus.

With regard to Town Hall, the architect was quoted as saying that the new 50,000-square-foot facility would serve the Town's needs until "at least 2012." What happens after 2012?

Perhaps the Town should be considering renting since the building will be adequate for only seven years, and this would appear to suggest that their needs are expected to change quite dramatically in this time.

The proposed Halton campus will

be approximately 540,000 square feet and will cost \$127 million. The facility will house the Region, Halton Regional Police, the Halton Catholic District School Board and the Halton District School Board.

Estimates suggest that taxpayers will save \$20 million over the cost of having four individual buildings.

The Region might also wish to look at buying an existing facility. A recent Brampton Guardian article reported the sale of the Nortel Networks Building in Brampton to Rogers Communications for \$100 million. The purchase included 63 acres of land and a one-million-square-foot building renovated only a few years ago.

What's interesting about these projects is the lack of acknowledgement about the changes in the way people do business these days with the expansion of the Internet. Imagine a virtual city where one could apply for a building permit over the Internet or pay your taxes on-line, or where employees could do their work from home offices.

Imagine how many citizens and businesses could benefit from high-speed Internet services across Halton. At present, Canada ranks as one of the highest consumers of energy. Imagine the effect on Halton's air quality and energy consumption if more people worked

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Remembrance Day and melons? Points to ponder

Mmm, watermelon. There's nothing like taking that first juicy bite and continuing on toward the rind, spitting the seeds as you go (which is most fun if you've got someone as a target).

Okay, for the sake of ethical journalism, I've got to admit I'm not a huge fan of the popular fruit. But that doesn't affect my point.

Have you ever watched children eat watermelon? They hold little regard for the mess they're making or the ever increasing stickiness covering their faces and fingers. It's a sight to behold. Yes, tomorrow life might offer something crummy like a rainy day, or maybe even something tragic.

But children don't worry about that. They're content to live for the moment, and that's all that matters.

Why mention that scenario now, on Remembrance Day? Because it's a visual image that was offered by an incredibly wise war veter-

an, Jim Moffat, whom I had the privilege of writing about elsewhere in this paper.

Mr. Moffat was speaking Wednesday to a packed lecture hall of students at Bishop Reding Secondary School.

This is what he said: "Look at life like a child eating watermelon. You know that look on their face as they're eating a piece of watermelon? That's how you should look at life, because it's fun."

Now there's some good advice. When I'm in my eighties as Mr. Moffat is, will I be able to look at my life and know I've done that?

If a war veteran who's seen the very worst of the human condition can still proclaim that life is good, how could I not do likewise? After all, I doubt anything I'll ever come up against can compare with the death and destruction Mr. Moffat experienced in war-torn Europe.



Around town

with STEPHANIE THIESSEN

As Remembrance Day approaches each year, I get a bit excited, because it means I get to write about some of the fascinating stories told to me directly by veterans. Unfortunately, that won't always be the case, because eventually there won't be any First and Second World War veterans left.

Each year, I take away with me a lesson. This

year, I thought I'd pass along my lesson of enjoying — truly savouring — life.

Although Mr. Moffat is a Brampton resident, Milton has many of its own equally fascinating veterans, from whose stories we can learn.

This Sunday starting at 1:30 p.m., Milton will salute its veterans as they walk in a parade from the local Royal Canadian Legion branch on Charles Street to the Victoria Park cenotaph in front of Town Hall.

Let's show them our appreciation by turning out, rain or shine.

A service will take place at 2 p.m.

Mr. Moffat, thanks for reminding me how precious and fleeting life is, and for encouraging all of us to make the most of each and every day.

I know I'll never look at a piece of watermelon the same way again.